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Do psychosocial attributes of well-being drive intensive Facebook use?

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ABSTRACT

Prior extensive literature on Social Networking Sites (SNSs) has linked their use with psychosocial well-being. Facebook use has also been associated with different attributes of psychosocial well-being. However, the extant literature is inconclusive regarding the nature of the relationship shared by the different attributes of psychosocial well-being and Intensity of Facebook Use (IFU). Furthermore, the prior literature has also revealed inconsistent findings concerning this relationship. To address this gap, this study investigated the significant role of different attributes of psychosocial well-being associated with Facebook use, namely civic-political participation, satisfaction of life, bridging and bonding of social capital, and online sociability on IFU. A total of four cross-sectional surveys were undertaken with adolescent and young-adult Facebook users from India over a period of one year. The results suggest that online sociability was the strongest, and life satisfaction was a non-significant predictor of IFU of both adolescents and young adults across all four studies. The bonding and bridging of social capital was a significant predictor of the IFU of high social economic condition (SES) adolescents, unlike young adults. Furthermore, bridging was, but bonding of social capital was not, a significant predictor of the IFU of low SES adolescents.

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1. Introduction

The use of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) including Facebook is very popular among adolescents as well as young adults (Hofstra, Corten, & Tubergen, 2015). Facebook offers an excellent medium for communication, connecting, escape, entertainment, self-expression, self-presentation, and academic and professional uses (Dhir, 2016a; Dhir, Chen, & Chen, 2015; Dhir, Kaur, Lonka, & Nieminen, 2016; Dhir, Khalil, Lonka, & Tsai, 2016; Dhir & Tsai, 2016). In recent years, an increasing number of empirical investigations have examined the different psychosocial well-being outcomes associated with the use of Facebook among young people including life satisfaction, civic and political participation, social capital, and online sociability. Prior literature suggests that

Facebook use among young adults is associated with enhanced levels of satisfaction with college life, bridging and bonding of social capital, increase in political and civic participation, and online sociability (see Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Zanno, 2013). However, these findings and related conclusions have been challenged (see Liu & Yu, 2013; Petersen & Johnston, 2015). Consequently, there is a need for more empirical studies to examine the nature of the relationship shared by Facebook use and various psychosocial well-being outcomes.

In order to investigate the integrated user engagement with Facebook use, Ellison et al. (2007) developed the Intensity of Facebook Use (IFU) scale which not only measures integrated user engagement, but also examines the level of emotional connectedness experienced by any Facebook user (Ellison et al., 2007). IFU is different from the traditional measures of evaluating service engagement (e.g., total time spent or frequency of platform use) because it represents holistic conceptualization of emotional connectedness as well as service use experience provided by computer-mediated platforms (see Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). Recently, scholars have adapted IFU to measure the intensive use of

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Twitter (Alhabash & McAlister, 2014; Buehler, 2014; Petersen & Johnston, 2015), Weibo (Mo & Leung, 2014) and other forms of SNS use (Phua & Jin, 2011).

Several studies have suggested a positive relationship between IFU and the psychosocial well-being of young adults. This includes better connectedness and happiness (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006), life satisfaction (Valenzuela et al., 2009), enhancement of self-esteem (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011), emotional support (Zanno, 2013), impression management and sense of belonging (Park & Lee, 2014), classroom and academic collaboration (Lampe, Wohn, Vitak, Ellison, & Wash, 2011), and social trust (Valenzuela et al., 2009). However, not all prior studies have suggested totally consistent findings (see Johnston, Tanner, Lalla, & Kawalski, 2013; Aubrey, Chattopadhyay, & Rill, 2008; Liu & Yu, 2013; Petersen & Johnston, 2015). Similarly, several other prior studies have concluded that IFU in fact degrades different aspects of psychosocial well-being such as self-esteem (Schwartz, 2010) and academic performance (Junco, 2012; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Furthermore, several studies did not even find any significant relationship between IFU and key attributes of psychosocial well-being such as satisfaction with campus life (Park & Lee, 2014), negative emotional states (Labrague, 2014) and students' social adjustment to college life (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Consequently, it clearly suggests that a larger picture of the relationship between IFU and psychosocial well-being has not yet been achieved.

The present study attempts to answer the open question, “Do psychosocial attributes of well-being play a significant role in driving Intensity of Facebook Use (IFU)?” If there is any relationship, then what is the nature of this relationship? A total of four cross-sectional studies were carried out with adolescent and young-adult Facebook users. The open research question of this study is answered through the means of four research questions. **RQ1.** Does civic and political participation via Facebook use drive the IFU of adolescents? **RQ2.** Does satisfaction with life and online sociability drive the IFU of adolescents? Did the role of satisfaction with life and online sociability in predicting the adolescents' IFU change over time (i.e., one year)? **RQ3.** What are the differences in the role of life satisfaction, online sociability and bonding and bridging social capital in predicting the IFU of adolescents from two different socio-economic conditions? **RQ4.** How do adolescents differ from young adults in the role of satisfaction with life, online sociability and bonding and bridging social capital in predicting their IFU? The study findings will strengthen the empirical as well as theoretical foundations concerning different psychosocial well-being outcomes associated with the use of computer-mediated platforms such as Facebook. Greater clarity and transparency of these relationships will ease the concern among educators and parents regarding excessive Facebook use and its negative impact on their children.

2. Background literature

2.1. Political and civic participation via Facebook

Political and civic participation has been recognized as a multidimensional concept that has several different interpretations (Valenzuela et al., 2009). Political participation refers to the process of influencing the government's policymaking through different means including displaying political stickers, participating in political campaigns, protesting, and buying products for the fulfillment of political motives (Valenzuela et al., 2009). In comparison, civic participation refers to an activity (which can be individualistic or collective) carried out in order to resolve the problems of a specific community (Valenzuela et al., 2009; Zukin, Keeter,

Andolina, Jenkins, & Delli-Carpini, 2006). This includes fund-raising, volunteering, community service, being a member of an environmental organization, and raising awareness of environmental issues (Valenzuela et al., 2009).

Prior literature suggests that SNSs have played a great role in nurturing civic as well as the political activities, particularly among young people (boyd, 2008; Raynes-Goldie & Walker, 2008) and thus it has positive effects on participation in community life (see Räsänen & Kouvo, 2007). Similarly, Facebook use is associated with enhanced online and offline political participation (Skoric & Kwan, 2013), and a positive relationship between IFU and political and civic participation has also been found (Skoric & Kwan, 2011; Valenzuela et al., 2009). However, in comparison, Skoric and Kwan (2011) emphasized that only a marginally significant relationship between IFU and online political participation was found, and IFU was more significantly related to traditional political participation. Interestingly, it is currently unknown whether civic and political participation via Facebook results in higher IFU. Furthermore, prior literature has not investigated this relationship in the context of adolescent Facebook users. It is important to investigate it since today's adolescents represent tomorrow's young adults. Consequently, this investigation will help scholars and practitioners to understand if and how SNS such as Facebook play any significant role in adolescents' interest and engagement in politics, civic duties and democracy.

2.2. Satisfaction with life

Life satisfaction measures an individual's evaluation of surroundings that can be positive or negative (Scheufele & Shah, 2000). Prior literature has positively linked life satisfaction with personal contentment and subjective happiness (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), quality and perceived social support provided by the social network (Young, 2006) and interpersonal communication (Diener, Sandvik, & Pavot, 1991). According to Kahneman and Krueger (2006), social ties also determine his or her satisfaction with life. Consequently, several studies have investigated the empirical linkages between the use of SNS such as Facebook and associated life satisfaction. However, many scholars have agreed that the findings regarding this relationship are largely inconclusive (Glynn, Huge, & Hoffman, 2012; Wang, 2013). Our own review of the prior literature also revealed similar findings. We observed two popular schools of thought pertaining to this relationship. On the one hand, scholars argue that people who actively participate in SNS use tend to experience higher connectedness and subjective happiness, which also translates into higher life satisfaction (Valkenburg et al., 2006). Similarly, many studies have found a positive relationship between students' life satisfaction and IFU (Glynn et al., 2012). In comparison to these, fewer studies investigated the relationship between life satisfaction and specific Facebook activities. To begin with, Kim, Kim, and Nam (2010) found that certain uses of Facebook lead to increased life satisfaction. Glynn et al. (2012) found that Facebook users with lower life satisfaction use it for news purposes, while Wang (2013) found that life satisfaction has a positive indirect effect on Facebook check-ins.

The second school of thought suggests that the relationship between life satisfaction and SNS use is actually reciprocal. To begin with, Ellison et al. (2007) observed that college students with lower levels of life satisfaction actually tend to actively participate in SNS for personal well-being reasons. Ellison et al. (2007) found that life satisfaction moderates Facebook use and perceived offline connectedness relationship, while Lou, Yan, Nickerson, and McMorris (2012) links IFU with loneliness. Smith and Kim (2007) argued that intensive SNS use results in the development of envy, which negatively impacts the user's life satisfaction. Feelings of

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